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NRC TO MEET WITH PSEG TO DISCUSS ANNUAL ASSESSMENTS OF HOPE CREEK AND SALEM NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS

Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will meet with representatives of Public Service Electric and Gas (PSEG) on Wednesday, April 30, to discuss the results of the agency's annual assessments of safety performance at the Hope Creek and Salem Unit 1 and Unit 2 nuclear power plants. The plants are located in Hancocks Bridge (Salem County), N.J.

The meeting, which will be open to the public for observation, is scheduled to begin at 7 p.m. in the PSEG Emergency News Center. The center is housed in the Salem County Department of Emergency Services Building, at 135 Cemetery Road in Salem, N.J. Before the session is adjourned, NRC staff will be available to answer questions from the public.

The performance period to be discussed is January 1 to December 31, 2002. In addition, NRC staff will provide an overview of how the agency's Reactor Oversight Process works, as well as efforts to upgrade nuclear plant security. PSEG will make presentations on tritium leakage discovered at the site and performance focus areas.

Letters sent from the NRC Region I Office to PSEG address the performance of the plants during the period and will serve as the basis for the meeting discussion. The letter pertaining to Hope Creek is available on the NRC web site at:

http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/LETTERS/hope_2002q4/pdf

The letter pertaining to the Salem plants is available on the NRC web site at:

http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/LETTERS/salm_2002q4.pdf

Overall, Hope Creek operated safely, the letter states. As a result, the NRC plans to conduct only baseline inspections at the plant through March 31, 2004. However, the NRC will closely monitor the utility's ability to effectively identify and resolve problems during the

assessment period. This is based on numerous inspection findings where there were ineffective evaluations of problems and untimely, inadequate corrective actions.

In the March 3rd letter regarding the Salem plants, the NRC likewise found that those units operated safely and met all cornerstone objectives. Consequently, the NRC also plans to conduct only baseline inspections at those plants through March 31, 2004. During the last assessment period, the NRC conducted a supplemental inspection at Salem Unit 1 in response to a “white” performance indicator – a measure of performance which can lead to increased oversight by the agency. That performance indicator pertained to the number of unplanned power changes at the plant. The inspection, which reviewed PSEG’s evaluations in this area, determined that corrective actions were appropriate.

Also, as at the Hope Creek plant, the NRC plans to closely monitor performance at the Salem plants in the area of problem identification and resolution during the current assessment period. Because the same corrective action program is concurrently implemented at all three plants, improvements will need to be implemented site-wide.

With regard to plant security, both letters note: “As you are aware, since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the NRC has issued several Orders and threat advisories to enhance security capabilities and improve guard force readiness. We have conducted inspections to review your implementation of these requirements and have monitored your actions in response to changing threat conditions. For calendar year 2003, we plan to continue these inspections, conduct portions of the security baseline inspection program, as well as performance additional inspections to evaluate your compliance with new requirements that may be ordered.”

Current performance information for Hope Creek is available on the NRC web site at:
http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/HOPE/hope_chart.html

Current performance information for Salem Unit 1 is available on the NRC web site at:
http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/SALM1/salm1_chart.html

Current performance information for Salem Unit 2 is available on the NRC web site at:
http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/SALM2/salm2_chart.html

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